

# J.J. Abrams At VES Awards: 'Star Wars' Sojourn “A Dream Come True”

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On a night dominated by rampaging apes and squishy robots, J.J. Abrams (<http://deadline.com/tag/j-j-abrams/>) got an award from the Visual Effects Society in part for what he's already done, with a long list of TV shows and films such as three *Star Trek* films, two *Mission: Impossible* films, *Cloverfield*, *Super 8*, *Lost*, *Fringe*, *Alias* and so much more.

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But he also was honored for what he's about to do: relaunch the *Star Wars* (<http://deadline.com/tag/star-wars/>) franchise later this year with its seventh film and give the assembled VES membership a whole lot more work to do over the next few years.

As emcee Patton Oswalt joked, see you next year for the *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* show. That's a good bet, given the anticipation for the film and all the follow-ons that Disney has stacked behind it as part of its acquisition of George Lucas' mighty empire. As for Abrams, living in and guiding the *Star Wars* universe has been a thrill ride, he said.

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“Spending the last two years in the world of light sabers and tie fighters has been absolutely challenging and a dream come true,” Abrams said.

Abrams said before the show that being chosen for the VES Visionary Award was “clearly a clerical error. But mostly, I just work with a whole lot of incredible VFX artists. This is what made me want to get involved in movies.”

When VES called to say they wanted to present the award to him, Abrams said he accepted



mostly because he wanted to say thank you to his parents, “who let me blow s\*it up,” and his sister “who let me blow *her* up.” He had several other thank yous to pass around, especially to all the visual-effects people he’s worked with, but he saved one for the head of Lucasfilm, Kathleen Kennedy.

“I want to thank Kathy Kennedy for saying the words, ‘Do you want to direct *Star Wars*?’ and actually being in a position to *let* me direct *Star Wars*,” Abrams said.

Zoe Saldana, who starred in Abrams’ *Star Trek* movies, presented the award, saying, “This man has truly done many things, but one thing he did no man has done before: He gave Spock a girlfriend. And then he gave me a job too.”

Visual Effects Supervisor Roger Guyett, a frequent Abrams collaborator who was onstage earlier to present other awards, took time to talk about Abrams too. “The one thing about J.J. is he always wants to know who’s doing the work,” he said. “In that way, he’s a true friend to the business we’re in.”

Onstage, Abrams told the tale of being 11, and his father had brought home an autograph from Douglas Trumbull, the pioneering visual-effects supervisor from *2001: A Space Odyssey* who happened to be working on the first *Star Wars* film. Trumbull wrote that he too started making films at a very early age, 13, and it was a great way to live a life.

“When Dad brought it home, I lost my f\*cking mind,” Abrams said. “This was my equivalent of getting an autograph from (1970s Dodgers star) Steve Garvey.”

Decades later, when Abrams finally met Trumbull and told him about the autograph, which he still had, Trumbull's response was a rather deflating and quizzical, "Huh?"

"It was a disappointing reaction," Abrams ruefully acknowledged to a roomful of laughs. "But he could not have been more right" all those years before that moviemaking was a pretty good way to make a life.

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